

Case 2796

Helophorus Fabricius, 1775 (Insecta, Coleoptera): proposed conservation as the correct original spelling

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Abstract. The purpose of this application is to conserve the name *Helophorus* Fabricius, 1775 for an important genus of water beetle, originally spelt *Elophorus*. Illiger (1801) emended this to *Helophorus* and this spelling is now almost universally used. However, Illiger's emendation was unjustified and it is proposed to rule that *Helophorus* is the correct original spelling.

1. Fabricius (1775, p. 66) established the genus *Elophorus* for two species of water beetle, *Silpha aquatica* Linnaeus, 1758 (p. 362) and a new species *Elophorus minutus* (p. 66).

2. Latreille (1810, p. 428) designated '*E. aquaticus* Fab.' as the type species. Fabricius had stated that the name *Silpha aquatica* referred to the Linnaean species.

3. Fabricius gave no indication of the derivation of his name *Elophorus*. Illiger (1801, p. 138) emended it to *Helophorus* on the grounds that the first part was derived from the Greek 'helos', a swamp. Smetana (1985, p. 18), however, pointed out that the name more probably means 'callus-bearer', and refers to the distinctive swollen ridges on the pronotum. Irrespective of the etymological derivation, Illiger's emendation to *Helophorus* is unjustified under Article 33b of the Code.

4. Illiger's emendation to *Helophorus* has been accepted by most modern authors. Almost all recent works on these beetles in such areas as agricultural entomology, ecology and palaeontology as well as systematics have used the spelling *Helophorus* (e.g. Balfour-Browne (1958), Fernando (1958), Angus (1970, 1982, 1992), Lohse (1971), Richards & Davies (1977), Coope (1979), Smetana (1985, 1988), Hansen (1987), Friday (1988) and Shatrovskiy (1989)). The only important recent works to use the spelling *Elophorus* are Chiesa (1959) and McCorkle (1965). Even the older literature has a preponderance of usage of *Helophorus*. As a summary of older work, Knisch (1924, p. 66) listed 39 authors of major works using the spelling *Helophorus* and 11 using *Elophorus*. A further measure of the relative degree of usage of the two spellings is that, of the approximately 180 species at present known, 20 were originally attributed to *Elophorus*, six to other genera and all the rest to *Helophorus* (data from Smetana (1985, Nearctic), Shatrovskiy (1989, eastern U.S.S.R.) and Angus (1992, Europe and adjacent lands)).

5. *Helophorus* is thus seen to be a large genus, important in the study of various aspects of entomology. As such it is important that the spelling '*Helophorus*' used in the great majority of works, especially the more recent ones, should be maintained.

6. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:
 - (1) to use its plenary powers to rule that the correct original spelling of the generic name *Elophorus* Fabricius, 1775 is deemed to be *Helophorus*;
 - (2) to place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology the name *Helophorus* Fabricius, 1775 (gender: masculine), type species by subsequent designation by Latreille (1810) *Silpha aquatica* Linnaeus, 1758, spelling ruled in (1) above;
 - (3) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *aquatica* Linnaeus, 1758, as published in the binomen *Silpha aquatica* (specific name of the type species of *Helophorus* Fabricius, 1775);
 - (4) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology the name *Elophorus* Fabricius, 1775 (ruled in (1) above to be an incorrect original spelling of *Helophorus*).

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